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SUBJECT: UN HOSTS NEW YORK MEETING OF JCMB COUNTRIES

11. (SBU) Summary: The UN Secretariat hosted a meeting in New York for representatives from Joint Coordination and Monitoring Group (JCMB) countries February 19 to deliver a readout of the recent meeting in Tokyo, and to discuss the upcoming Security Council renewal of the mandate for the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA). The UN said it was focused on implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, and noted that it would have to "rebuild trust" with the Government of Afghanistan following the failed nomination of Paddy Ashdown to be the UN's Special Representative, and the expulsion of a UNAMA staff member. JCMB members pushed for a stronger UN role in Afghanistan, and expressed support for prioritizing the UN's many responsibilities. Denmark was critical of UNAMA's weak role vis-a-vis NATO and the United States. Russia, which will serve as Security Council President in March, said Russia expects to schedule a Security Council discussion of Afghanistan on March 12, following the expected March 6 issuance of the latest UNAMA report. End summary.

UNAMA - PRIORITIES AND STAFFING

12. (SBU) Scott Smith, team leader for Afghanistan in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), told representatives of JCMB countries that the UN was pleased with the results of the Tokyo conference, and reported two themes dominant in the discussion: the commitment of the international community to Afghanistan remains "very strong" and the Afghanistan government is gaining considerable capacity in many areas, including security and governance. Smith said the UN believes the key issue is implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. Moving forward, it will urge complete transparency on project details from the many development agencies in Afghanistan. Following from this process, the UN will work to require concrete benchmarks for these assistance projects, in order to prioritize those that have the most urgency. Smith said the UN detected little interest in reopening the Afghanistan Compact; therefore the JCMB remains the coordinating entity for the international community in Afghanistan. Police reform, rural development, election planning and counter-narcotics are among the UN's top priorities. Smith noted as well that the UN will continue its political outreach throughout Afghanistan, through its satellite offices in the provinces and its

headquarters in Kabul. This was a normal and essential activity for UNAMA, Smith said, and does not involve any

¶3. (SBU) Smith said that the UN is discussing at senior levels potential candidates for the replacement for Tom Koenigs, the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), and he was therefore not privy to

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the latest information. All those involved, however, understand that the new SRSG's relationship with President Karzai is "critical." He added that the UN was working with UNAMA to decrease UNAMA's vacancy rate, as well as to increase the number of international staff in the provincial offices.

JCMB REACTIONS AND THE UNAMA MANDATE

¶4. (SBU) Canada echoed Smith's call for a renewed focus on implementation of the Compact, and said countries should consider channeling more aid through Afghanistan's central budget. With regard to the UNAMA mandate, Canada is open to prioritizing certain areas, especially elections, and would like to see specific reference made to increasing UNAMA's security. The Netherlands said it would support language strengthening the institutional relationships between NATO, the UN and the EU. France, the European Commission, Russia and Germany all supported efforts to prioritize the elements of the current mandate, although they (as well as Pakistan) said they believed the basic pillars of the mandate were adequate and did not require drastic modification. Pakistan and Russia said there was a clear "sense of urgency" for UNAMA to do better. Russia, which will serve as Security Council President in March, said Russia expects to schedule a Security Council discussion of Afghanistan on March 12, following the anticipated March 6 issuance of the latest UNAMA report.

¶5. (SBU) Denmark, speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, criticized UNAMA's conduct, arguing that the UN should hold the international community's "overall strategic vision" for Afghanistan. The Danish diplomat described NATO and the U.S. as the two dominant foreign centers of influence in Afghanistan, not the UN and said this needed to change. He added that UNAMA is leader-less and has a high vacancy rate of professional staff; both negatively affect the UN's credibility and effectiveness in Afghanistan.

¶6. (SBU) Separately, poloff spoke on February 20 with Emmy Takahashi from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Takahashi asked that UNHCR would like the Security Council to include language calling on all countries to respect the voluntary repatriation process for Afghanistan refugees.

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